

Guilbeault's activist agenda

National Post (f/k/a The Financial Post) (Canada)

May 30, 2022 Monday

National Edition

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Section: OPINION; Pg. A8

Length: 708 words

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Body

During the Conservative leadership debate on May 11, Pierre Poilievre took the moderator to task for not mentioning an eco-terrorist attack on a pipeline project in British Columbia, when listing recent attacks on critical infrastructure.

On Feb. 17, around 20 masked assailants - some wielding axes - engaged in a co-ordinated attack on a Coastal GasLink construction site in northwestern British Columbia. They commandeered heavy equipment and inflicted damage on property, along with psychological terror on the workers.

That attack occurred around the time of the Freedom Convoy protest and Poilievre's retort identified a clear blind spot among the country's chattering class when it comes to environmental extremism.

Another attack occurred on May 4, when the vehicles of a former Conservative minister were set on fire. An anti-pipeline group in Montreal claimed responsibility, citing the former politician's current role with a bank in financing the Coastal GasLink Pipeline.

All these events occurred within months of famed environmentalist David Suzuki's flippant remarks about pipeline bombings.

Rhetoric matters when we are discussing the lawful use of our nation's energy resources. Canada has a legal process that involves environmental scrutiny of resource projects. We also have a process for ensuring that the Indigenous communities that are affected by the projects are properly consulted and accommodated.

It stands to reason that federal politicians - especially cabinet ministers - should be committed to the legal process surrounding resource development and the lawful use of our natural resources. Why, then, do we still have a federal environment minister who has shown a marked disdain for this lawful process? In his past life as an environmental activist, Environment Minister Steven Guilbeault unlawfully and recklessly scaled Toronto's CN Tower as part of an environmental protest. He also engaged in other risky antics, which he labels as "civil disobedience." Guilbeault has never expressed any contrition or regret over his past unlawful acts.

"Civil disobedience was never a goal in and of itself. It was just a tool. And now I'm using different tools," Guilbeault told the National Post in 2019, while running for office. This cavalier attitude toward the rule of law is unsettling. It is almost as if he is using elected politics - where one is supposed to be committed to the law and respect different interests and the common good - as an extension of his activist agenda.

Guilbeault's activist agenda

Now that he is a cabinet minister overseeing lawful processes that allow for the orderly use of natural resources, Guilbeault should have completely disavowed his past antics and professed a commitment to the rule of law. Yet his comments suggest otherwise.

This matters because there are eco-terrorists out there who don't care about the rule of law or the lawful use of natural resources. They are fanatics who believe their climate agenda justifies harming property and terrorizing individuals. They don't care that Indigenous communities have signed deals with energy companies and depend on the projects for their livelihoods.

Clearly, Guilbeault was not involved in these attacks. However, eco-radicals may feel emboldened that a past activist with a flexible view of the rule of law is in government.

Those involved in discussions over resource developments may justifiably feel uncomfortable breaking bread with Guilbeault. Can he truly be expected to draft fair legislation affecting resource companies he has shown he despises? Some may argue that Guilbeault's approval of the Bay du Nord offshore oil project near Newfoundland suggests moderation, but it only raises concerns that the government is favouring certain regions over others and still harbours an anti-western agenda. Being sued by environmentalist organizations he used to work for also doesn't help with optics.

Our environment minister shows a clear imbalance between his activist agenda and his duties as a cabinet minister. Uneven Steven needs to reassess his role in government.

National Post Joseph Quesnel is an independent policy commentator on energy and Indigenous issues for the Modern Miracle Network. !@COPYRIGHT=© 2022 Postmedia Network Inc. All rights reserved.

Graphic

Aaron Harris, The Canadian Press Files; Steven Guilbeault was a Greenpeace activist when he scaled the CN Tower in Toronto in 2001. The now-politician's failure to denounce his civil disobedience raises questions, writes Joseph Quesnel.;

Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Document-Type: Opinion

Publication-Type: Newspaper

Subject: CABINET OFFICES (90%); ECOTERRORISM (90%); TERRORISM (90%); TERRORISM & COUNTERTERRORISM (90%); TERRORIST ATTACKS (90%); ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES (89%); ENVIRONMENTALISM (89%); GOVERNMENT ADVISORS & MINISTERS (89%); NATURAL RESOURCES (89%); NEGATIVE NEWS (89%); POLITICS (89%); PROTESTS & DEMONSTRATIONS (89%); RULE OF LAW (89%); ELECTIONS & POLITICS (88%); ENVIRONMENTAL DEPARTMENTS (88%); ENVIRONMENTAL LAW (88%); CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE (78%); CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE (75%); REPORTS, REVIEWS & SECTIONS (74%); BOMBINGS (73%); CRIME, LAW ENFORCEMENT & CORRECTIONS (73%); INDIGENOUS PEOPLES (71%); LAW & LEGAL SYSTEM (71%); CAMPAIGNS & ELECTIONS (65%); EDITORIALS & OPINIONS (59%); during,conservative,leadership,debate,pierre,pollievre (%)

Guilbeault's activist agenda

Industry: PIPELINE TRANSPORTATION (78%)

Geographic: TORONTO, ON, CANADA (78%); MONTREAL, QC, CANADA (73%); BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA (73%); ONTARIO, CANADA (58%); CANADA (94%)

Load-Date: May 31, 2022

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